

A. C. Hill
Emancipation in
Louisiana.

New Orleans, 1864.

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EMANCIPATION IN LOUISIANA.

SPEECH

OF

ALFRED C. HILLS,

(OF ORLEANS PARISH.)

IN THE

CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION OF LOUISIANA,

MAY 4th AND 5th 1864.

NEW ORLEANS :

PRINTED AT THE ERA BOOK AND JOB OFFICE

1864.

SPEECH OF MR. HILLS.

Mr. Abell having offered a Minority Report in opposition to Emancipation, in the Constitutional Convention of Louisiana, it was moved that the same be rejected. A discussion arose on the question of Slavery, which occupied the Convention for several days. On Wednesday, May 4th, Mr. A. C. HILLS, delegate from the Second Representative District, Parish of Orleans, addressed the Convention as follows :

MR. PRESIDENT : In the National Convention of 1794, a proposition was made to abolish slavery in the American colonies belonging to France. A member of that body arose and proceeded to defend the principles of universal liberty, whereupon he was interrupted by another member, who exclaimed : “ President ! do not suffer the Convention to dishonor itself by a protracted discussion ! ” It seems to me that for three days we have been witnesses of a most extraordinary spectacle. A body of men assembled on the avowed principles of universal freedom—elected on a platform of immediate emancipation, accepting seats on this floor under the proclamation which declared the slave laws in Louisiana inoperative and void, because they did not apply to any class of persons in this State—I say, a body so elected under that proclamation and upon that platform, is compelled to listen for three days, to one of its members standing up here and defending the accursed system of American slavery as it existed before this war. I said in my previous remarks, we could not do anything to perpetuate slavery without committing perjury before God and man. For that remark

I have been arraigned here as attempting to menace this Convention by some authority of the Commanding General. I repel all such insinuations as false and groundless, but I repeat, that in my opinion, gentlemen, members of this Convention cannot stand up here and argue in favor of slavery in any form, without committing moral perjury. That is what I said, and to that I shall adhere. (Applause.)

Mr. President, the gentleman from the Fifth District [Mr. Abell] has seen fit to make a long argument to overthrow my assertion that slavery does not exist in the State of Louisiana. I say that assertion is literally true, that there is not a slave in the State of Louisiana to-day. There is no slavery, and can be none without the presence of physical power to enforce the obedience of the slave to his master. That is an indispensable element of slavery, without which it cannot exist. I ask the gentleman, where is the force to-day to compel the labor of the slave in this State? Where is the auction-block? where is the lash? where is the power of the master to whip his slave and to enforce his will? The auction-block has disappeared in the light of the new civilization that has dawned upon us; the slave marts, where human beings were crowded together like cattle, thank God! is no more among us; and the lash has been abolished—first by the great law of necessity, and secondly by the proclamation of military power.

If the gentleman thinks slavery still exists, let him attempt to sell a slave within the Federal lines. Suppose he advertises a slave for sale at auction to-morrow. On the way the slave says, "I wish to cross the street." He goes, and the gentleman from the Fifth follows and attempts to seize him by the collar and drag him to the auction; what is the result? The gentleman from the Fifth is arrested for a breach of the peace, committed for assault and battery (laughter) and brought into the court, and under the present laws of the State the man he has attempted by force to take to the auction-block stands his equal, as he does in the sight of that almighty law of justice which has overthrown slavery in this State forevermore. (Applause.) There is no slavery here and never can be. If

all the thunder bolts of Jove could be gathered together and discharged at once, they could not shake the earth enough to awaken from its eternal sleep the carcass of this miserable institution. The gentleman has attempted to justify slavery from the example of the Egyptians. I admire him for it. It is most fitting and proper that the man who stands up in this day and age to justify such a system, should go back to the Egyptians, whose religious altars smoked with human sacrifices, and whose idols were the most gross and obscene of all the pagan nations of which we have any historical record. I intend no disrespect to the gentleman. He is much my senior in age, and my superior in learning ; but I say if the gentleman were to die, I should expect to see him embalmed in an Egyptian sarcophagus, with a hieroglyphical inscription upon his tomb, which, if I were permitted to suggest, would consist of two words : "Old Fogey." (Laughter.) Let him go back to the Egyptians—that is where slavery belongs. Let him go back to the Romans and Greeks—that is where it belongs. It belongs to the rude ages of mankind, before the light of Christianity and civilization had fallen upon the human family. Has he forgotten that these very men whom he holds up as models for us to follow and copy, had gladiatorial shows, and that under their institutions men were thrown into the arena to be devoured by wild beasts ? He can justify that as well as slavery. He can justify polygamy by the example of the ancient nations, and every other species of vice and crime. But I supposed we had grown up beyond the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians. I thought that we were free-born and enlightened Americans, living in a time of revolution, to be sure, but still adhering to those great landmarks of freedom that were so dear to our fathers, and which, I believe, are dear to the majority of this Convention.

Not satisfied with attempting to justify slavery by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans, he has attempted to bring to its side the divine Scriptures and the sublime teachings of Christianity. Now, Mr. President, if you go back in the ecclesiastical history of the world, you will find every infamy that has been perpetrated, has

been done in the name of some religion. It is not the first time that men have stolen the livery of heaven to serve the devil in. How many wars and massacres have been committed in the name of Christianity? Does that prove that Christianity countenances massacre, butchery, robbery and crime? Not at all; it only proves they were done hypocritically in its name. If the gentleman wishes to go into an argument in favor of fraud, he might distort some parts of the Scripture to prove it was right. He might take the case of Jacob and Esau, where the former clearly swindled the latter out of his birthright, to prove that swindling is a proper and divine institution, and ought to be incorporated into the Constitution of Louisiana, which we are here to frame to-day. I am ashamed that any man in the latter half of the nineteenth century, with so much learning and ability, should spend time in attempting to make us believe that slavery is in accordance with the precepts of religion. Sir, that Divine Being, who came down to teach us the right path, gave us one commandment, one precept, which blasts forever the institution of slavery, and human wrong and injustice of every kind: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." I say that in this precept he blasted forever this institution of slavery, which is essentially unjust in itself, and founded in piracy and robbery—a system of violence and usurpation from beginning to end.

Not satisfied with the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans and religion, the gentleman has brought to his aid the illustrious names of American History—those men who founded our institutions. He has told us they were slaveholders, but very judiciously has he refrained from telling us what they thought of slavery itself. He has referred to Washington, but forgot to tell us what was the dearest wish of his heart. Washington said: "This is among the first wishes of my heart, to see some plan adopted by which slavery in this country may be abolished by law." Henry Lawrens, of South Carolina, wrote to his son, in 1776: "I abhor slavery." Jefferson has been quoted here. In speaking of the slave he says: "We must wait with patience the workings of an overruling Providence

and hope that it is preparing the deliverance of these our suffering brethren." "Brethren" is the word which Thomas Jefferson applied to these men. "When the measure of their tears is full—when their groans shall have enfolded heaven itself in darkness, the God of Justice will awaken to their distresses, and by diffusing light and liberality among their oppressors, or at least by his exterminating thunder, may manifest to the world that they are not left to the guidance of blind fatuity."

Mr. President, the exterminating thunder has come! The accumulated wrongs which this people have heaped upon an unfortunate race, brought it down from high Heaven, and it has obliterated this system in Louisiana, as it has throughout the whole land. (Applause.)

Now, I propose to let Mr. Abell answer Mr. Abell, by referring to different portions of his speeches. I will put the gentleman from the Fifth District against the gentleman from the Fifth District; and I think it is better so than to answer him myself.

He tells us with a great deal of flourish that the nature of the negro is idleness, that he will not work unless compelled to under the lash of the driver. In the next breath he tells us he believes if these same lazy, idle, good-for-nothing vagabond negroes are set free, they will come in competition with the white laborers, who will stand no chance at all. There is Mr. Abell against Mr. Abell. (Laughter and applause.)

In the same strain he boasted that the American people, being a mixture of all the blood of the world, was the greatest, the most powerful, civilized, and altogether the smartest race ever existing on the face of the earth. He boasted we had whipped England two or three times, and that we could thrash France, and were never whipped ourselves and never could be, in the nature of things. The next moment he says if the slaves are freed in Louisiana they will rise up and imbue their hands in the blood of his posterity. Though not at all afraid of England, France or any other white nation, he is much afraid of the negroes!

Another instance of the gentleman answering himself is where he says the white never would labor for so small pay as the negroes. Then he asks what we are going to do with the negroes if we set them free. I think he gave a good answer to his own question when he said they would work for less wages than the white man.

He says again the negroes are perfectly miserable—are in a most degraded condition—entirely incapable of taking care of themselves. Then he states that slavery is a civilizing and elevating institution. Now I want to know how many centuries it takes to elevate a race so that it is capable of taking care of itself? This institution which the gentleman would have us believe is so benignant and elevating to the blacks, has been in existence in Louisiana from the earliest period of her history down to the moment of rebellion, and yet, according to the same gentleman, to-day this race has become so degraded that it is utterly unable to take care of itself!

Another instance of this logic. He says the bone and sinew of the country would be driven out of the State by the emancipation of the slaves. In the next breath almost, he tells us that negroes, organized under slavery, will work a great deal better than if they are free. Now, then, if the negroes are going to work more in slavery than when they are free, I wish to know how freeing them is to drive the white laboring man out of Louisiana? If the negro will work better as a slave, I think the white man has less chance of employment under a system of slavery!

The gentleman, in the course of his remarks, has seen fit to speak of the people of Louisiana under the Presidential and military authority as an "oppressed" people. If the people of Louisiana are oppressed, as the gentleman would have us believe, I wish him to tell us by whom we are oppressed? He seems to forget that three years ago the rebellion was forced upon the country by the slaveholding oligarchy; that Louisiana was in the full enjoyment of commercial and agricultural prosperity, and that under the protecting ægis of the Union her slave-holders were in secure possession

of their slaves ; that it was the rebellion that interrupted this prosperity, destroyed slavery and plunged the State into the condition in which we now find her. I would like to have him point out in what manner the military authorities have ever oppressed the people of Louisiana—to point out to us how this Convention would have been called together but for these very authorities.

Mr. President, I could but feel as I have listened to this discussion, that we see here at least some of the fruits of the efforts of our noble soldiers who have fallen in the battle-field for their country. Let me ask the gentleman, if I had stood upon this floor, or any other in Louisiana, three years ago, and said what I have said to-day, what course would have been pursued by this slaveholding oligarchy he stands up here to defend? The halter, sir, was the penalty for free speech in Louisiana then. Does not the gentleman know that intellectual bondage is inseparably connected with slavery everywhere? Does he not know that as the most gross and loathsome productions of nature flourish only in her darkest recesses, so the loathsome and hideous institution of slavery can grow only where the light of civilization and free speech are carefully excluded? He knows that before the Federal flag came up the river on the flagship of that gallant old tar, Farragut, to stand up in this hall, and speak as I have spoken and as others have spoken, would have been met with the penalty of instant death. Talk to us of oppression? Let him go back and read the annals of slavery, and see how many murders have been committed in its behalf and under its shield. There is no crime against free speech, free conscience, free opinion, that has not been perpetrated in behalf of this system; and yet the gentleman stands up and calls the people of Louisiana oppressed! How many rights would he enjoy if the Federal flag were not here?

He has told us he thought civil government in Louisiana would be detrimental to the people. I ask the gentleman why then he is here? If the interests of the people are opposed to this Convention, why does he consent to occupy a seat in this hall? If the Federal

flag were to be displaced by that bastard banner, the flag of the Confederacy, the gentleman might escape the halter for having so faithfully defended the rebellion here, but even that might not be sufficient to save his neck.

MR. ABELL, (*interrupting*).—I call the gentleman to order. I have not advocated the rebellion on this floor.

THE CHAIR.—The gentleman from the Second District (Mr. Hills) is in order.

MR. HILLS.—I assert that for three days the gentleman from the Fifth, (Mr. Abell,) has defended the rebellion on this floor.

MR. ABELL.—I call the gentleman to order again, sir. I deny that I have advocated the rebellion.

THE CHAIR.—The gentleman is in order.

MR. ABELL.—Then, sir, I respectfully appeal from the decision of the chair.

The question was then put: "Shall the chair be sustained?" which was carried in the affirmative.

MR. HILLS.—I trust the interruption will not be deducted from my half hour. I asserted, with a full knowledge of the meaning of my words, that for three days the gentleman has defended the rebellion on this floor. I will now explain what I meant. I say that any man who stands up and defends slavery defends the rebellion, for they are synonymous terms at this moment. (Applause.) The gentleman has taken, I suppose, the "ironclad" oath of the President. If so, he has sworn allegiance and obedience to the proclamation of the President, and to all the laws of Congress framed on this subject. The rebellion is the legitimate child of slavery. Slavery was sure to bring on rebellion in this country, and the wisest men in the land foresaw it years ago. The prophetic words of Jefferson, which I repeated, foreshadowed it. The framers of our Constitution did not believe that it would long remain in existence in the United States, and carefully avoided all direct allusion to it in the Constitution, because they regarded it as a disgrace and a system that ought to be and would be abolished.

If the gentleman will take the trouble to examine the debates on the adoption of the Constitution, he will find that such is the fact. All the wise men who helped to frame that Constitution believed that slavery was an evil, and would speedily die out.

He has mentioned some illustrious names. Let me ask him if he knows the opinion of Benjamin Franklin on the subject. I beg to remind him he was the President of the first Abolition society ever organized in the United States. Does he know the opinion of Judge Jay? Can he bring forward in the annals of our country the name of one great man of the Revolutionary period who said a single word in defence of slavery?

The President's hammer came down at the expiration of the half hour.

MR. TERRY moved that Mr. Hills have leave to conclude his remarks, which motion was seconded and carried; but Mr. Hills declined to proceed further at present. It was moved that the Convention adjourn, and that he have the floor on Thursday morning, which motion was carried.

THURSDAY, May 5th, 1864.

The adjourned order of the previous day having been called, namely, the report of Mr. Abell in opposition to emancipation.

MR. HILLS said: Mr. President—At the conclusion of my half hour, yesterday, the Convention very kindly voted that I should have leave to continue my remarks. I declined to do so at that time, but understood that I was to have the floor this morning. If any gentleman objects to me proceeding against the rules, I will yield the floor; but if there is no objection, I should like to make some further observations on this most grave and interesting subject. [Cries of “no objection,” and “go on!”]

MR. HILLS continued: I intend to speak of principles and not of men. For the gentleman from the Fifth District [Mr. Abell] I have personal respect and esteem, but his principles, as set forth on this floor, I hold in utter detestation. At the same time it may be useful to have a representative of these heathenish sentiments in the Free State Convention. We have all heard of the temperance lec-

turer who found it useful to take his drunken brother along as a horrible example of intoxication, and as a contrast to the results of total abstinence. And so it may serve to set forth our noble work of emancipation in more glowing colors, if we have constantly with us a champion and defender of the faith delivered unto the Copperheads. I said yesterday that the gentleman from the Fifth District had for three days advocated rebellion on this floor ; but the gentleman's interruption and the stroke of the President's hammer prevented me explaining this remark so fully as I desired to explain it. I endeavored to show that the framers of the Constitution of this Republic were opposed to slavery as a principle, and only tolerated it because it existed, and because they thought that in a very few years it would be abolished by the progress of freedom and civilization. I also stated that in the Constitution which they framed they did not mention the word "slave" or "slavery." While certain provisions of that wise document have evident reference to the subject of slavery, and recognize it as an existing institution, I deny emphatically that slavery finds any support in the Constitution or laws of the National Legislature. Slavery, sir, is a local institution, founded upon State laws and not upon any national law. The slaveholder of Louisiana, before this war, did not rely on the Constitution of the United States for the right to sell his slaves on the auction-block ; he did not rely upon any of the laws of Congress for his authority to wield the lash on his plantation, but he derived his power from the Black Code of Louisiana, and the Acts of the Legislature of this State. But we find, sir, that notwithstanding all the framers of the Constitution were opposed to slavery as a principle—believing it to be wrong, cruel, unjust, and opposed to the interests of the country, the new doctrine was promulgated by the slaveholding oligarchy and seemingly gained growth year after year, that slavery was a Divine institution and sanctioned and sanctified by the laws of God and humanity, and that it found secure shelter and perpetual support in the Constitution and laws of the land. Year after year the slave power came on apace with its aggressions and demanded this and that surrender on the part of the free States.

Surrender after surrender was made, until the people of the free States finally arose in their majesty and said to the slave power, "thus far shalt thou come and no farther—the Territories of the country, the national domain in which all have an equal interest, shall hereafter be free!" That is what they said when they elected Abraham Lincoln, our worthy Chief Magistrate. They did not propose to strike down the right of slaveholders in Louisiana—they did not propose to interfere with slavery in any of the States.

I know the falsehood was insidiously circulated by the pro-slavery press, both North and South, that the Republican party was an abolition party. But as one of its members, who had, I believe, a pretty good knowledge of its principles, I tell you that party had no intention of interfering with the institution of slavery in the States where it existed by law. The issue upon which we went to the country was the extension or the non-extension of slavery into the national territories, which we believe were free by the great laws of nature, and ought to remain free forever. But after the election—when the sovereign people had decided that the doctrine of non-extension should prevail, what was the course of the slaveholding oligarchy, for whose rights the gentleman from the Fifth is so solicitous? Why, sir, they said the will of the people should not be obeyed—that the Constitution and the laws should be set at defiance; that Abraham Lincoln, although rightfully and legally elected, should not be the President of the slaveholding States. They revolted, and what was the cause of it? Slavery, sir.

The slave power was balked in its purpose to draw to its embrace the free territories of the nation. The champions and instigators of the rebellion told us they seceded in order to protect their divine institution of human bondage. It was slavery first, last and always; slavery in the beginning, the middle and the end! The vice President of the so-called Confederacy told us that slavery was the corner stone of that extraordinary fabric. Every slaveholder and every candid pro-slavery newspaper that has spoken on this subject since the outbreak of the war, has told us it was all in the interest of slavery; and every one who studies the subject candidly and impartially cannot fail to come to the conclusion that

slavery is the great and the sole cause of the rebellion. Therefore it is, I said, the gentlemen has for three days advocated rebellion on this floor ; and I assert, without the fear of logical contradiction, that no man can defend slavery without also defending the rebellion.

Mr. President, we have all heard of men who upset their own kettle of fish, and it strikes me the gentleman from the Fifth has given us a luminous example of this catastrophe. He labored for two long days, all through Monday and Tuesday, to show that slavery was justifiable, not only by the example of the Greeks, Romans and Egyptians, and by the Scriptures, but he would make us believe it was justifiable in itself—right in the abstract, and every way ; that it was beneficent to the slave and the white man. After laboring two days to build up, establish and defend the divine right, origin and historical sanctity of this institution, what did he tell us yesterday? In the very beginning of his speech he says, “I have repeated and again say that I never saw the day, and never expect to see it, when I was in favor of slavery !” So that after spending two days to convince us that it is right, he states on the third day he does not believe in it himself. I ask why he does not believe in it, if it is divine, and sanctioned, and sanctified by the Scriptures and by Almighty God? If it is the best thing that can possibly happen to the African and the master, I ask him why in God’s name he is not in favor of it? I should be the last man, if I believed in his argument, to say I was not in favor of it.

The gentleman in his remarks of yesterday tried to convince us that liberating the slaves of this State by Constitutional enactment would be a species of wholesale robbery on the part of this Convention, and told us, in substance, Mr. President, that the Government of the United States had stolen all the property of the disloyal people, and that the Convention now proposes to steal all that is left in the hands of the loyal. Now, Mr. President, if there is no slavery in this State to-day, I want to know who is responsible for it? If there has been any robbery of slaves in Louisiana, I wish him to explain who are the robbers? I will tell you who they are. They are the people of Louisiana themselves, who of

their own accord, by passing the act of secession, and by inaugurating the rebellion, ruined and destroyed their slave property forever. If there is any robber, it is the secessionist, not the Union army, who came down to uphold the honor and integrity of the country. This people inaugurated the civil war against the United States, and in its progress, as wise men foresaw from its beginning, it became a military necessity to emancipate their slaves. Emancipation came not as an act of robbery, not as an act of violence against the people, but, as I have said, as an act of military necessity, and to uphold the integrity and honor of the flag. When a country is at war, its government can tax its resources to the utmost for its defense. When the national life is at stake, will anybody say that the Government has not a right to free slaves, or take any species of property, in any State or any part of the country, to maintain its own existence? The gentleman might as well say that the Government has no right to demand his time of the soldier. There are thousands and hundreds of thousands of men in the army to-day, who were making more money at home than they possibly can in their present situation. The gentleman might, I say, consider this a species of robbery, thus to make these men devote their time and leave their business to join the ranks, and the argument would be as good in one case as in the other. It became necessary to liberate the slaves of rebels, because the Southerners were using them against us--upon the plantations to raise products while the rebels were fighting us. More than this, they were in the rebel service, employed as teamsters, and in some instances, as there is pretty good reason for believing, even as soldiers. To strike down slavery was then to strike down the strong arm of the rebellion.

The gentleman has told us that certain parishes are excepted in the President's proclamation. I wish to look at that for one moment. If any one entertains the idea that because Mr. Lincoln exempted certain parishes in his proclamation of emancipation, he therefore secured or guaranteed slavery in them, he is very much mistaken. He did not, in that document, guarantee any rights

whatever to slaveholders, but merely said that while the institution was abolished in certain parishes, it was in the others left to take care of itself.

Mr. President, slavery *has not been able to take care of itself* in the parish of Orleans or in any of the other excepted ones, because, as I have said, it is the creature of local law, depending upon State legislation for its existence, and by the act of rebellion the State laws were suspended if not abolished, and there are now no operative laws under which slavery can be supported or upheld in this State. The element of physical, brute force, to compel the obedience of the slave to his master, is wanting, since it does not exist in this parish nor any within our lines.

Mr. Lincoln, by his proclamation, as I admit, leaves the claim of the slaveholders in the excepted parishes to be adjudicated hereafter. They can bring their claims against Louisiana or the National Government for their property, as they call it, when perhaps they will get compensation and perhaps they will not. Slavery does not exist in any parish for the reason I have already stated, and for another and perhaps a better reason, which is that a large portion of those who formerly were slaves are now soldiers in the ranks of the Union army. (Applause.) Will the gentleman tell us that the men who have imperilled their lives in the defense of the flag of their country, the men who wear the uniform and carry the bayonet of the Union, are ever to be made slaves again? Mr. President, the ensanguined fields of Port Hudson bear witness to the valor of those men, who, in three successive charges in the very mouth of the enemy's guns, proved the fact that the negro would die for the Union. (Great applause.) Does he tell us that such men, their relatives, wives or children, shall ever wear the shackles of slavery again? It would be a shame, a disgrace, a stain upon the nation, which the blood of all our soldiers could never wash out. Mr. President, the earth cannot receive in the same instant the footprint of a soldier and a slave! (Applause.)

The gentleman from the Fifth has flaunted in our faces, during a three day's speech, the phantom (for it is a phantom) of negro

equality. Now, if you go to the free States, you find there is no negro equality there. Is the gentleman afraid that the white race is so much upon a level with the negro that negro equality will prevail, unless we forever subject the blacks to the most foul injustice and keep them perpetually under our feet? I suppose he is one of those who are afraid of amalgamation, or, as it is politely termed in these modern days, miscegenation! I suppose he fears if the slaves are liberated, that all the fair daughters of the land will be seized with a desire to marry negroes, and that the young men will also wish to marry negresses! Now, Mr. President, according to my belief, that is a matter of taste. [Laughter.] I have no taste for that sort of equality myself, and accordingly have no fear of it. If gentlemen fear any such thing, I cannot undertake to explain their reasons for it. So far as the matter of equality and amalgamation is concerned, I do not see that the Northern or free States have given so luminous an example of it as the slave States, for I have observed, during some four years spent in Maryland, Virginia and Louisiana, that there are a great many so-called negroes, with very white faces, and I believe that they were born in a state of slavery! There must be some practical explanation of this. I have seen more mulattoes, quadroons, and all that sort of persons, in one day in Louisiana, than I ever saw in all my life in any free State! I am not afraid of negro equality because I believe that the white race is the dominant race in this country, and always will be. I believe it is superior in intelligence and skill, and that the Anglo-Saxon race is destined, in the providence of God, to rule this country forever. The mean fear of this phantom of negro equality never has kept me awake for a single moment, and I do not believe it ever will.

The gentleman tells us that if the slaves are free, we shall have to place a gospel minister upon every street corner and plantation, and that with all that trouble we cannot keep them straight. Well, Mr. President, I agree with the gentleman perfectly, if these gospel ministers are to preach the same kind of gospel that the gentleman has preached on this floor; I think that that kind of gospel never

would succeed in keeping negroes or anybody else straight, particularly when we consider that gentleman's exposition of the divine precept, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them." It struck me in listening to the gentleman's exposition, that he had a very singular method of applying that commandment, and that it should, according to him, read like this: "All things whatsoever the slaveholder would that slaveholders should do unto him, do ye even so!" He leaves out the slave entirely. Here, let us suppose, is a man with two hundred slaves, and the gentleman says, I will do unto this man as I would have him do unto me, if I were a slaveholder, but of the two hundred men he says nothing. That is *his* gospel, but I believe that the divine command of Christ applies to the African as well, and that we should do unto him as we would that he should do unto us. (Applause.) I prefer to take my theology, not from the lips of the gentleman from the Fifth District, but from the lips of the Divine Teacher, who said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these my little ones, ye have done it unto me." The lowest and most degraded being has claims upon us, equal to those of the highest and greatest; and this divine gospel, which is so distorted to apply to the slaveholder, but not to the slave, I say applies as much to the one as to the other. If the gentleman from the Fifth prefers to seek the emblems of his gospel among negro whipping-posts and negro auction-blocks, the lash and insignia of despotic power; if he wants the instruments of the slaveholder's tortures—the thumb-screw and the heavy irons—to represent his gospel, he is welcome to them; but these do not represent my gospel. (Applause.) I prefer to take mine from Paul, who tells us that God "hath made of one blood all the nations of men to dwell upon all the face of the earth." I prefer the sublime words of Isaiah, who said: "Is not this the fast that I have chosen, to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and let the oppressed go free?" I don't believe the negro whipping-post is the best emblem of Christianity and civilization; if the gentleman does, he is welcome to his views.

The gentleman from the Fifth District, among the other illustrious names quoted, to show that slavery is legal and right, has cited that of Judge Taney, of the Supreme Court of the United States, and his decision in the famous Dred Scott case, in which, with disregard for all natural law, and, as I think, for all constitutional law, that Judge tells us that the negro has no rights which the white man is bound to respect. Mr. President, I am not much of a lawyer, although I did read Blackstone, Kent and a few such books, when several years younger, but it strikes me there ought to be the principle of justice and common sense in all law. But it would seem, from the gentleman's argument, that he was trying to convince this Convention that the law is utterly devoid of both. I believe there are statutes and codes higher than Constitutions, written in the hearts and affections of men no legislation can obliterate. There are moral obligations resting upon every man which no statute can change. I think we have a good illustration of the instability of Judge Taney's law in the course of events since that decision was promulgated. The slave-holding oligarchy boasted that, by this famous decision, slavery was fixed for ever more—nothing could disturb it in this country. But I think we have found by this time that even Judge Taney's decision was not sufficient to blot out from the human heart those laws, written there by the finger of God, and that the divine laws are stronger than the decisions of any judge. Since that decision was promulgated, slavery, in spite of it, has been swept away by the course of events, and Judge Taney's decree, and all other laws ever made, or attempted to be made, to uphold it, have proved impotent to circumvent the decrees of Heaven. (Applause.)

As one of the results of this system of slavery, which the gentleman has so ardently advocated, we have heard a great deal of slaveholding chivalry; we have been told that the sons of slaveholders were particularly noted for heroic and chivalric qualities. If I understand chivalry from some reading of it, as it was practiced in the earlier ages, it is that principle that leads the strong to defend the weak; wherever innocence, virtue and helplessness pro-

sented itself and was in peril, there the true knight was bound to draw his sword and go to its defence. It seems to me this slaveholding chivalry, which has been illustrated at Fort Pillow, is a very different article. I understand upon Red River it has been illustrated in a similar manner, that soldiers--native-born white citizens of Louisiana, who have volunteered for the defense of their country and this State against its armed enemies, have been most brutally murdered in cold blood by these sons of chivalry. This is a poor time of day to stand up here and defend this system of slavery, that so brutalizes those who wield its power. One of my colleagues from the Second District [Col. Thorpe] has already told us what an excitement prevails in consequence of the massacre at Fort Pillow. It seems as though the enemies of this country were determined this should become a war of extermination--were determined to do everything that may be done to provoke the United States Government to a bloody retaliation. These crimes are all committed in behalf of slavery, and still in a free State Convention, elected on the platform of immediate emancipation, called into existence under a proclamation declaring slavery abolished, we have for three days listened to a gentleman advocating it as sanctified by ancient example, and approved by Christianity itself.

Mr. President : It was my fortune, on Monday, to stand on the consecrated field of Chalmette, now green with the verdure of spring, and eternally green in the memory of patriots as the scene of Jackson's fame—a spot sanctified by the blood of those noble heroes of the second war, who fought and bled for the honor and integrity of their country. The occasion was the dedication of the ground as a cemetery for Union soldiers, and I was pleased to see on that historic field a great number of the delegates of this Convention, and I could not but feel as I walked over that hallowed spot, that the struggle which made it forever historic, was not so important as this which is now going on. The men of that generation periled their lives and fought for the integrity of their country, but the soldiers of this conflict are fighting under the impulses of a new civilization ; there is a new epoch in our history, more glorious for

liberty, and it seems to me any man whose feet pressed that soil, must have come away feeling it is a solemn and momentous duty we have to perform here—to uphold that same flag, that same honor, that same liberty, for the martyrs of which that burial ground has been set apart. (Great applause.)

After a protracted discussion, the motion to reject Mr. Abell's pro-slavery report was carried, by a vote of sixty-six "yeas" and thirteen "nays."

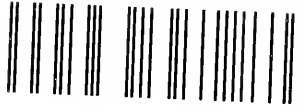
On Wednesday, May 11th, a day to be hereafter forever memorable in the history of Louisiana, and one to be commemorated with bonfires and illuminations, the following Ordinance of Emancipation was passed by an almost unanimous vote, only thirteen recording their names in opposition to it :

"We, the people of the State of Louisiana, in Convention assembled, do hereby declare and ordain as follows :

"Section 1. SLAVERY AND INVOLUNTARY SERVITUDE, EXCEPT AS A PUNISHMENT FOR CRIME, WHEREOF THE PARTY SHALL HAVE BEEN DULY CONVICTED, ARE HEREBY FOREVER ABOLISHED AND PROHIBITED THROUGHOUT THE STATE.

"Section 2. THE LEGISLATURE SHALL MAKE NO LAW RECOGNIZING THE RIGHT OF PROPERTY IN MAN."

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